

DUCKS  
UNLIMITED

# NEWS RELEASE

WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DUCKS UNLIMITED PROVIDES 'CARE' FOR CENTRAL VALLEY WETLANDS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- "Despite the fact that fewer than 300,000 acres of an original four million acres of wetlands remain in California's Central Valley, it is still one of the most important wintering areas in North America for migratory waterfowl," said Alan Wentz, Director of Operations for Ducks Unlimited's (DU) Western Regional Office in Sacramento. The Central Valley provides wintering habitat for 60 percent of all waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway and 20 percent of all waterfowl in North America.

In an effort to restore the habitat benefits on much of the Central Valley's once-natural wetlands, DU has developed a cooperative conservation program called VALLEY CARE. The VALLEY CARE (Conservation of Agriculture, Resources, Environment) program focuses on the development, restoration and enhancement of wetlands and agricultural habitat on privately-owned lands throughout California's Central Valley.

VALLEY CARE will benefit the biological diversity of California. It is expected to help endangered species, shorebirds, and many other types of wildlife in addition to waterfowl. The program will help implement the objectives of the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture, a portion of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP).

Through the VALLEY CARE program, DU is working with the agricultural community and individual landowners encouraging the implementation of improved land and habitat management techniques. As a result, many of these agricultural lands accommodate vast numbers of migratory waterfowl while actually improving the land by reducing soil erosion, promoting weed control and conserving water supplies.

Examples of active cooperative projects include DU's work with rice farmers in the Central Valley to develop an alternative to burning rice stubble after harvest. With support from the Wildlife Conservation Board, DU is building five "rice rollers" which

will be provided to farmers through their local Resource Conservation District offices. Instead of burning the straw, farmers use the rice rollers to roll and crush the rice stubble after harvest, and then they re-flood the fields.

This new practice benefits the farmer by decomposing rice straw and controlling weeds while providing winter habitat and a food source (waste rice and invertebrates) for water birds. The practice is proving to be cost effective in comparison to the alternatives. It also eliminates air pollution created by the normal practice of burning, which is now tightly regulated.

Other agricultural practices that DU encourages include: winter flooding of fallow and set-aside lands, conservation tillage techniques, and improved grazing management on ranch lands. DU also hosts landowner workshops which provide hands-on demonstrations of innovative habitat conservation practices.

Overall habitat conservation goals for DU's VALLEY CARE include annual winter-flooding of 200,000 acres of rice lands and 30,000 acres of other farmland in the Central Valley; improving wildlife habitat on 100,000 acres of farm and ranch lands; restoring and enhancing 1,000 acres of wetlands, riparian forests, and related habitats each year; and providing a comprehensive public education program on California's wetlands, conservation farming, and wildlife habitat in the Central Valley.

Ducks Unlimited expects to spend \$16 million to deliver VALLEY CARE over the next five years. More than \$1.8 million in gifts, grants and contracts have been secured for the VALLEY CARE program since the program began in March. Additional partners are being sought to complete the conservation program's funding needs.

The Hofmann Foundation of Concord, California recently announced that it will provide a \$3 million leadership donation to the VALLEY CARE program. This is the largest single donation ever awarded by the Foundation and the gift is also the largest individual contribution made to the NAWMP.

The NAWMP is an international agreement between the United States and Canada which established goals for rebuilding North America's waterfowl population to levels of the 1970s -- 62 million breeding population and 100 million fall flight. DU has been actively involved in the promotion, funding and implementation of the NAWMP since its inception in 1984.

Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest private sector waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization with nearly 500,000 members nationally. Since its inception in 1937, DU has raised more than \$750 million and conserved over 6.2 million acres of habitat throughout North America.

For more information contact Ducks Unlimited, Inc., National Headquarters, One Waterfowl Way, Memphis, TN 38120 or DU's Western Regional Office, 9823 Old Winery Pl. #16, Sacramento, CA 95827, (916) 363-8257.

Ducks Unlimited's  
VALLEY CARE PROGRAM

The First Five Years  
(1993 - 1998)

California's Central Valley is one of the most important areas for migratory birds in North America. It also is an area under tremendous pressure from humans. In recent years, the Central Valley has been the scene of major conflicts over water, agriculture, development, and the natural environment.

The residents of California and the Nation have fought over how to best use this extremely significant area. Advocates for various views have looked on the Central Valley as a high-stakes battleground and developed a "take no prisoners" attitude. In general, the natural resources of the Valley have suffered with many species on the edge of oblivion.

Yet, in spite of the pressures on the Central Valley, there are positive signs that lead many observers to hope solutions to these problems might be found and implemented.

The following pages sketch out a partial solution. Ducks Unlimited (DU) has initiated a modest program known as VALLEY CARE with the faith that there is hope in this most complex of problems and that by forming unique partnerships among local communities, business, agriculture, conservation, government, and other private interests, we can provide solutions that will serve the future of California and the Nation.

## CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

The Central Valley is a large area that includes the Sacramento Valley, the San Joaquin Valley, and the Delta-Suisun Marsh complex where the two valleys join. From Red Bluff in the north to Bakersfield in the south, the Central Valley stretches over 400 miles.

Historically, the Central Valley contained 4 million or more acres of natural wetlands and 6,000 miles of stream, river, and associated riparian habitats. Today, fewer than 300,000 acres of wetlands and 950 miles of riparian woodlands remain.

In spite of this tremendous reduction in natural habitats, the Central Valley provides wintering habitat for 60% of all the waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway and 20% of all waterfowl on the continent. The wetlands, riparian areas, and associated habitats provide living space for many other species of migratory birds, unique plants and insects, a diversity of other wildlife, and threatened and endangered species.

With only a fraction of the original wetland and riparian habitat base of

California remaining, migratory birds and other wildlife have come to depend on some types of agricultural lands for part of their living requirements. Improved management of these lands could accommodate vast numbers of migratory waterfowl without impacting the viability of the farming operations.

Unfortunately, today even the farmland is under severe threat. The American Farmland Trust indicates the farmlands of California's Central Valley are the most threatened agricultural region in the country. It is incumbent on agriculture and conservation to work together if we are to maintain the agricultural land base and the complex of habitats on which wildlife depends.

Several years ago Ducks Unlimited began developing a close working relationship with the agricultural community in the Central Valley while maintaining its traditional wetland habitat projects on public lands. We are now expanding this work into VALLEY CARE.

### **VALLEY CARE - A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE**

VALLEY CARE is Ducks Unlimited's comprehensive plan to bridge the gap between conservation and the private landowner in California's Central Valley. VALLEY CARE is an accelerated effort that expands on DU's conservation accomplishments in California.

Ducks Unlimited has worked on public and private lands in California since 1986. In that time, DU has established a reputation as an organization that accomplishes specific objectives that benefit both wildlife and the cooperating landowner or agency. We work under the philosophy that if our efforts are to be successful, we must create long-term change that landowners or agencies support.

VALLEY CARE will bring new focus to private lands and public education efforts to benefit waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, neotropical birds, and other wildlife by enhancing agricultural lands, restoring natural wetlands and riparian areas on private lands, and providing a broad array of technical assistance and education/information materials and programs. These efforts will compliment DU's traditional wetlands restoration efforts on public lands, which will continue, be enhanced, and become a component of VALLEY CARE.

### **VALLEY CARE - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In addition to providing a general network of activity on wetland and riparian habitats, VALLEY CARE will have five specific areas of focus. These are:

- ricelands,
- land enhancement for wildlife,
- restoration of specific wetland and riparian sites,
- education/communications, and
- research.

The following sections provide a brief snapshot of some of the activities in each area.

### **RICE (Restoring and Improving California's Environment)**

Ricelands offer unique opportunities to provide winter habitat for many species of water birds. Ducks Unlimited has worked with the California Rice Industry Association, other conservation groups, and individual rice growers for several years to develop methods for winter-flooding ricelands. These efforts have been very successful on a small scale.

DU pioneered the use of rolling, crushing, and flooding of rice field stubble as an alternative to burning. Initial tests of this effort show that the new practice is accomplishing the objectives of the rice grower to decompose waste straw and control weeds and disease with the additional benefit of providing winter habitat and a food source (waste rice and invertebrates) for water birds. The practice is proving to be cost effective in comparison to the alternatives. It also eliminates air pollution created by the normal practice of burning, which is now tightly regulated.

In 1992-93 41 cooperating growers winter-flooded 20,000 acres of rice land with DU's assistance. DU provided technical assistance, advice, and equipment. We expect to increase the acreage substantially this winter.

As with any new practice, there are barriers to acceptance within the agricultural community. RICE will encourage the acceptance of this practice by increased demonstrations, building new equipment, which would be given to conservation districts or other local agencies where it would be available for loan, and a variety of technical assistance and extension activities. All work will be done in cooperation with the rice industry by building on the partnerships DU has already established within the agricultural community. As these practices are accepted, DU would increase its level of monitoring and research to ensure that the objectives are being obtained. As necessary, DU will work with the rice industry and individuals to modify and perfect the technique as new knowledge is developed.

The goal of RICE is to establish a minimum of 60,000 acres of flooded, harvested riceland available to waterbirds in the initial two years of VALLEY CARE. Our ultimate goal for the program is 200,000 acres of winter-flooded habitat as a newly-adopted practice.

## Land Enhancement for Wildlife

In addition to rice growers, a wide range of opportunities exist to work with landowners throughout the Central Valley to improve wildlife habitats. Farm and grazing lands, managed waterfowl areas, and public/private sanctuaries represent a few of the opportunities. A few specific areas of interest include the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Suisun Marsh, the Grasslands, and District 10. VALLEY CARE provides a vehicle for Ducks Unlimited to assist many landowners in improving their lands for wildlife.

Assistance would be provided farmers and ranchers throughout the Central Valley to improve their land management for the benefit of water birds and other wildlife and their farm/ranch operations. This will include winter flooding, new tillage techniques, improved grazing management, and other methods. We work one-on-one with landowners and we provide a variety of information and education services. DU uses experienced staff who understand both agriculture and wildlife with the ability to work in both communities.

The VALLEY CARE goal for technical assistance is improved management on 100,000 acres during the initial five years. We believe it is possible that this aspect of VALLEY CARE could positively affect several times the 100,000 acre goal. The following examples discuss some of the areas and approaches to be used.

The Delta and Suisun Marsh - One of the focus areas for VALLEY CARE is the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh. While the following discussion is focused on the Delta, the Suisun Marsh complex of public and private land is an area where DU expects to work to assist in improving management for waterfowl and other wildlife by developing management plans and assisting in the modification of water delivery and control systems.

DU has worked with farmers in the Delta to winter-flood idle cropland for waterfowl, sandhill cranes, swans, and other wildlife for several years. Approximately 12,000 acres are now being voluntarily flooded in the Delta as the result of DU's efforts with private landowners. The practice provides winter water and food for water birds and it assists the farmer by slowing or preventing erosion and land subsidence, preventing weed growth, reducing soil salinity, and maintaining the farmer's right to use the water.

VALLEY CARE has the goal of annually flooding 30,000 acres of cropland in the Delta. Through this program DU provides guidance for timing, depth, and duration of flooding and other management techniques through formal planning with the landowner. VALLEY CARE also will assist with any necessary redesign of water delivery structures or other engineering services. Eventually, our goal is to establish a grower's management group that would continue over the long term to provide the greatest

benefit to both the wildlife and the farmers of the Delta.

Existing Wetland Habitats - VALLEY CARE will reach out to those individuals and organizations that currently own or control wetland habitats in the Central Valley. A large number of duck hunting clubs, nature preserves, and other wetland habitat areas exist in the Valley. Approximately 2/3 of the remaining wetland habitats in the Valley are privately owned and controlled. While some of these areas are managed by professional wildlife biologists, most are not. DU has hosted many training programs and seminars, and provided management plans for such areas in the past. As VALLEY CARE is expanded, DU will work to improve the management of these private wetland areas. VALLEY CARE will:

- assist in developing management plans for privately-held wetlands;
- enhance area-wide water delivery and control systems where feasible;
- work with duck clubs and other privately-held wetlands to assist with capital improvements where feasible and cost effective; and
- sponsor seminars, newsletters, field trips and other information/education services.

All of these efforts will increase the knowledge of wetland owners and managers throughout the Valley. The training programs will be supplemented by a series of management guidance documents that would be available free or at cost to those who wish to improve their management for wetland wildlife.

Demonstrations - VALLEY CARE will conduct numerous demonstrations as part of its technical assistance program. Assistance can be multiplied many times over if others are aware of the results. We will work with cooperating landowners to show others via field days, publications, tours, and other efforts how land management can be improved through careful planning. We will work to gain maximum public exposure with the media on all demonstrations.

Using Existing Networks - While VALLEY CARE will provide increased information and assistance to private landowners and provide increased focus for all of DU's work in the Central Valley, we do not intend to create our own information delivery networks. We will work closely with the traditional information services that already have the necessary infrastructure. For instance, the Cooperative Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, Resource Conservation Districts, the California Farm Bureau, individual Conservation Districts, and many communication vehicles currently provide ready access to landowners, agri-business, and others who have an interest in the VALLEY CARE program. Many of our efforts will be directed at working with these networks to deliver information and technical assistance, in addition to the direct one-on-one work of our staff.

## **Restoring Wetland and Riparian Habitats**

VALLEY CARE is restoring natural wetland and riparian ecosystems on public and private lands. We work with cooperating landowners and agencies to restore wetland complexes in areas where we have technical assistance and outreach programs for landowners. This is a critical aspect of the overall thrust of VALLEY CARE.

Winter flooding of rice and other crop lands provides significant wintering habitat for water birds and other wildlife. However, these species need the diversity of natural, undisturbed wetlands within the same landscape. Interspersion of restored, natural wetlands in the landscape dominated by enhanced agricultural lands greatly adds to the value of the area for waterfowl, sandhill cranes, swans, and many other resident and migratory birds. VALLEY CARE will restore an average of 1,000 acres of such natural habitats each year.

The restoration of wetlands and riparian areas will occur on lands that are under public ownership via fee title or conservation easement or on private lands where the landowner is willing to provide legal, long-term protection for the site. Considerable opportunity for this type of wetland/riparian habitat restoration exists throughout the Central Valley. VALLEY CARE provides a means to address this demand.

For instance, DU is currently working on several restoration efforts on protected lands. In Sacramento County, VALLEY CARE projects are restoring 330 acres of wetlands in two parcels of the Cosumnes River Preserve. These restored wetlands, added to wetland and riparian restorations already completed on the Preserve will provide secure resting areas for sandhill cranes, waterfowl, shorebirds, and numerous other species that forage on nearby lands. Other restoration efforts of VALLEY CARE are underway throughout the Valley on protected lands including Llano Seco Rancho, Graylodge Wildlife Area, Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, and the Grasslands.

## **Education and Communications**

Perhaps the most vital part of VALLEY CARE is our education and information function. All of the efforts mentioned above speak to the need for improved communications. VALLEY CARE will employ a wide range of education and information efforts. Traditional audiences, such as children (schools), conservation groups, and landowners, will be targeted, but we also intend to provide outreach to the business and industrial community, the media, and the general public.

Dedicated education staff will be hired to deliver information programs and existing staff will be trained to better deal with the many audiences to which VALLEY CARE will appeal. We will provide specialized newsletters, technical guidance documents, bulletins and brochures, regular releases to the media, videos, and a range of other services. All of our employees will be available to speak to audiences on



reasonable request. We will target the 35,000+ members of DU in California to be ambassadors for the VALLEY CARE program.

DU has a well established "Greenwing" program that allows children to venture into wetlands, band waterfowl, learn about the heritage of the shooting sports, and better understand wetland ecology. VALLEY CARE will strengthen the Greenwing program and provide a vehicle for delivering better information on wetlands and the entire VALLEY CARE program to a broad range of children. Our Greenwing efforts involve adult volunteers who provide of their time and energy to make this effort work.

## **Research**

Research is an important component of the VALLEY CARE program. Research conducted under VALLEY CARE will be primarily directed at improving techniques for technical assistance, finding cheaper methods of developing and restoring habitat, solving problems, and monitoring the status of habitat in the Central Valley.

The following are examples of the type of research now under way and planned for the future. Most of the research conducted by DU in VALLEY CARE is supported by agencies that have a vital interest in the outcome of this program.

Existing research is looking into the agronomic impacts of the winter flooding of rice fields. This research is answering questions related to disease, nutrient cycling, and straw decomposition. It is supported by the Bureau of Reclamation and is being conducted by UC-Davis, the Fish and Wildlife Service, DU, and others.

DU is working with members of the CVHJV and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to determine the relation of the winter-flooding of rice and general wetland restoration to the production of mosquitoes. The research will help to develop techniques that will prevent disease and nuisance mosquitoes from becoming a problem.

DU, in concert with Pacific Meridian Resources, The California Resources Agency, and NASA is developing a satellite-based technique for monitoring the status of wetlands and riparian areas throughout California. When this product is completed, it will provide map products, data bases, and a monitoring system for use by many cooperators.

Research with a wide variety of partners will become more critical as VALLEY CARE develops. A more complete perspective on the research needs associated with the program will be developed over the next several months.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

VALLEY CARE depends on partnerships. DU has a long history of working

with many partners. Landowners are our most important partner, but numerous agencies, conservation groups, foundations, and others are also vital to the performance of VALLEY CARE.

The Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture (CVHJV), a component of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, is the partnership from which VALLEY CARE flows. VALLEY CARE is the vehicle by which DU is working to support the CVHJV. The partners in the CVHJV have been and will continue to be primary partners in an expanded VALLEY CARE effort.

## **FUNDING VALLEY CARE**

VALLEY CARE will cost a minimum of \$16 million over the first five years. Mr. Ken Hofmann, through the Hofmann Foundation, has committed a lead challenge gift of \$3 million to VALLEY CARE with the hope that his gift will encourage others to follow him in pledging major support for VALLEY CARE.

DU's Western Regional Office has secured an additional \$2.5 million in grants and contracts to compete the initial year of VALLEY CARE projects. Additional partners are being sought to complete the funding needs of VALLEY CARE. DU will work with its traditional partners to secure as much of this funding as possible, but it is essential that new partners and cooperators be found to make VALLEY CARE a reality. DU is committed to raising an additional \$11 million from public and private sources over the next four years.

In addition to the direct costs that will be funded by the above described sources, there will be numerous other contributions to VALLEY CARE that will not show on the ledger. Such contributions include the value of land (equivalent in rent or easements), water used in demonstrations, voluntary contributions of time and equipment, other in-kind services, and materials and supplies. We estimate that, by the end of the first five years, these other contributions will equal or exceed the \$16 million in cash that is needed to operate VALLEY CARE.

VALLEY CARE is a broad concept that includes many components. VALLEY CARE will be funded as a series of projects that will accomplish specific goals as outlined. Individual cooperators will have the opportunity to partner on specific projects or make general contributions to VALLEY CARE.

## **THE BUDGET**

The following information is a summary budget of where we estimate expenditures will occur over the five year period. Year one is well along to completion

of its budget needs. Commitments are now being sought for future years.

Table 1. Estimated budget categories for VALLEY CARE (all numbers in thousands). (These generalized numbers are targets; final numbers will vary from these.)

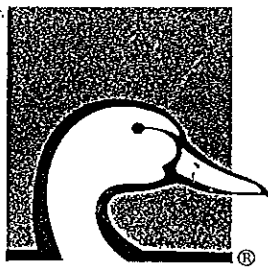
YEAR	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Habitat Work	1,200	1,300	1,400	1,300	1,300	6,500
Private Lands	575	750	850	950	950	4,075
Education	121	350	450	450	450	1,821
Research	100	250	300	400	400	1,450
Admin. Expen.	299	397	450	465	465	2,076
<b>TOTALS</b>	2,295	3,047	3,450	3,565	3,565	15,922

## PERSONNEL

In order to make VALLEY CARE a reality it will be necessary to hire additional personnel. Core staff members to administer, direct, and help deliver VALLEY CARE are already employed by DU. These staff members will redirect significant portions of their energies to VALLEY CARE. Additional staff will provide a variety of speciality backgrounds focused on delivery of products and operational support under the supervision of existing staff.

Overall direction for VALLEY CARE will be the responsibility of Dr. Alan Wentz, Director of Pacific Flyway Operations for DU. Dr. Jack Payne, Director of Private Lands, will supervise day-to-day activities for delivery of VALLEY CARE products. Wetlands restoration, water delivery, and other engineering/construction activity will be supervised by Mr. John Nagel, Habitat Operations Supervisor. Dr. Frederick Reid, Regional Biological Supervisor, will be responsible for research, coordination of workshops and training efforts. Mr. Del Case, Director of Development, will coordinate and be responsible for private fund raising. Ms. Holly Liberato, Hopkins, Liberato and Associates, will coordinate public grant fund raising.





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September 15, 1993

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT: JACK PAYNE**

## **DU HIRES BIOLOGIST TO ASSIST DELTA FARMERS**

**SACRAMENTO, CA --** "Ducks Unlimited has hired a technical assistance biologist, Mark Steele, to work with the farmers of the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl," according to Dr. Jack Payne, leader of the group's VALLEY CARE program.

Historically, the Delta was one of California's most important wetland areas. In its natural environment, prior to the 1950s, the Delta consisted of tidal swamp and overflow lands and grasslands covered with dense growth of tules and other vegetation, which provided habitat for many species of fish and wildlife. Over time, reclamation and development have eliminated much of the prime wetland habitat from this region.

"However, many wetland restoration opportunities still exist in the Delta. Many farmers are willing to work with Ducks Unlimited and resource agencies to improve their lands for wildlife without direct financial compensation," says Payne.

Steele, who has a degree in Environmental Studies from California State University, Sacramento, has had wetland restoration experience on private duck clubs in the Central Valley. He will be available on a daily basis to provide information and assistance to landowners who flood their fields after harvest for wintering waterfowl.

"I am delighted to be a part of the DU team, who will be delivering VALLEY CARE in the Delta. We will be providing advice to farmers, while benefiting the many waterbirds that use this area," says Steele. Steele further explained that because no public refuges

exist in the Delta, the welfare of the tens of thousands of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds that winter in the Delta depend on the interest and management of the private landowner. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture is a partner with Ducks Unlimited in its program with Delta landowners.

DU's VALLEY CARE program is a comprehensive effort to bridge the gap between conservation and the private landowner by providing programs that benefit both. Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization with active programs across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

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